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SUBJECT: IDENTIFICATION/VOTER REGISTRATION ENDS, BUT MUCH
REMAINS TO BE DONE BEFORE ELECTION

REF: A. ABIDJAN 406
[1](#)B. ABIDJAN 402
[1](#)C. ABIDJAN 315 AND PREVIOUS
[1](#)D. 08 ABIDJAN 616

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary. The identification/voter registration process, which began almost one year ago, ended formally on June 30. The fact that it was carried out without violence is a major step forward in the peace process. The accuracy of the results could, however, be questioned. Accusations of fraud have re-surfaced in recent days and the President's camp has complained that large numbers of Ivoirians were not able to register before the deadline. Much work remains to be done before a final voter list can be produced. If the next stages of the electoral process are beset by the same logistical and organizational problems that plagued the identification process, it may become technically impossible to observe the November 29 date. End Summary.

Identification/Voter Registration Ends

[1](#)2. (U) The identification/voter registration process, which began on September 15, 2008 and was extended several times, ended on June 30. As of June 21, over 6.2 million had been registered. The CEI plans to announce the final enrollment figure in a week. The process was carried out in 11,000 centers nationwide as well as in 23 countries overseas: Belgium, Burkina Faso, Canada, China, Denmark, France, Gabon, Germany, Ghana, Great Britain, Guinea, India, Italy, Mali, Morocco, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, Tunisia, and the United States. Despite logistical and organizational challenges and setbacks, the process was completed without violence.

Multiple Steps Needed Before Election Day

[1](#)3. (SBU) While registration has ended, much work remains to be done in order for the first round of the presidential election to be held as scheduled on November 29, 2009. The data gathered for each applicant at the registration centers needs to be electronically processed and checked for duplication. This process was supposed to be ongoing at 70 regional centers concurrently with the registration process. However, 56 of these centers are not yet operational because a lack of electricity and air conditioning has prevented installation of the computer equipment needed to conduct this work. The CEI told Embassy that the centers should become operational in late July.

Electoral List Must Be Finalized

[1](#)4. (SBU) The next step is publication of the draft electoral list. This must occur by August 29 for the election to be held as scheduled on November 29 since the electoral code provides that the draft list must be published no later than

three months before the date of the election. The citizenship of new voters (i.e. those whose names were not on the 2000 electoral list) is supposed to be verified by checking historical archives before the draft list is published, but it appears that the political parties have not yet agreed on which archives may be consulted. Since the issues of who is a citizen of Cote d'Ivoire is at the core of the 2002 rebellion that brought about the country's political crisis, this will be a critical issue (See Reftel D). This is an issue on which it will be difficult to achieve consensus and about which there is already confusion. For example, on May 28 the Secretary General of the opposition PDCI, one of the country's three largest political parties, told Ambassador that everyone on the draft electoral list would be considered a citizen unless proof were presented to the contrary; it is not clear that the CEI shares this perspective.

15. (SBU) Challenges to the draft electoral list will be the next major hurdle. Once the draft list is published, challenges regarding the inappropriate inclusion on or omission from the list of a person who went through the identification process will have to be made within 30 days. The CEI's decision about a challenge can be appealed to a judge free of charge by lodging a complaint with the clerk of the court. CEI President Mambe told Ambassador on June 30 that the political parties will not be allowed to challenge the inclusion of a potential voter. Only an individual claiming to have proof that someone on the list is not Ivoirian will be allowed to challenge the inclusion of that individual. Individuals can lodge complaints against any number of persons as long as they present proof. Persons who

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knowingly present false challenges will be liable to prosecution. Complaints about mistakes in identity data (name, gender, profession, etc.) will be submitted directly to the judiciary rather than to the CEI. Judges are required by law to resolve all electoral list disputes within 8 days and their decisions cannot be appealed. The CEI President told Ambassador that the final list will not be published until all challenges to the draft list are resolved. According to the electoral code, the final voter list must be published 15 days before the election.

Candidates Must Register and be Approved

16. (SBU) Candidates must register with the CEI 45 days before the election. The CEI transmits candidates' names to the Constitutional Council within 72 hours of receiving them. The Electoral Code provides that the Constitutional Council publishes the final list of candidates no later than 20 days before election day. While it is clear that the major presidential candidates have been in pre-election mode for months, the electoral code provides for a specific period of official campaigning, to be set by decree. The CEI President told Ambassador on June 30 that a person must be on the electoral list in order to be a candidate. This would seem to mean that candidates' formal registrations cannot begin until the final electoral list is published, leaving very little time for the official campaign period.

Cards Must Be Printed and Distributed

17. (U) Neither identity cards nor voter cards, which are the end products of the identification process, have yet been printed. Printing will commence once the final electoral list is published. The cards will be printed in Cote d'Ivoire, but the machinery to do so has been imported. The CEI was unable to tell Embassy whether the machinery has in fact already arrived since Sagem, the French company hired by the government to print them, is in charge of this.

Numerous Decrees Must Be Signed

18. (SBU) The Prime Minister's Office told Embassy that the President will have to sign about 40 decrees to permit the holding of an election. CEI President Mambe doubted that many are really needed but confirmed to Ambassador that at a minimum President Gbagbo has to sign decrees to approve: the final electoral list, list of overseas registration sites, list of polling sites, the staff to man the polling sites, printing of the voter cards, and validation of the final voter cards. Mambe said the normal procedure would be to prepare and present to the President for signature all the decrees at one time.

19. (SBU) Comment. The fact that the identification process has been completed without violence is a major step forward in Cote d'Ivoire's emergence from its crisis. All peace agreements before the Ouagadougou Political Agreement (OPA) floundered when it came time to address the issue of identification of the population, ostensibly one of the major reasons for the 2002 rebellion. However, challenges to the integrity of the identification process are possible. There have been numerous charges of fraud in recent days (See Reftel B). In addition, government and FPI-controlled newspapers both carried articles on July 1 bemoaning the large numbers of Ivoirians who had not been able to register before the process ended on June 30. It is true that many persons only recently received birth documentation as a result of the reconstitution of the civil registries. There are also indications, however, many Ivoirians just waited until the last moment and were then faced with long lines at registration centers. Evidently many doubted that the June 30 deadline would be real. The presidential election may not take place on November 29 due to a lack of will (See Reftel A), but it is still technically possible to observe that date. However, the CEI faces a tight timeline. Any delays or glitches will truly make it technically impossible to organize the election by November 29.

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